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FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8967
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 6097
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1391
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1568
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0658
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000629

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LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2017

TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PREL](#) [ER](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: UNMEE: CONFRONTING SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

REF: A) STATE 89356 B) ASMARA 00056

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) The following is in response to reftel A.

¶2. (C) Since the establishment of the UN Peacekeeping Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) in 2001, there have been few reported incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and trafficking in persons (TIP) within Eritrea. The Chief of the UNMEE Human Rights Office (HRO) Mamadi Diakite said that there were no substantiated incidents of either SEA or TIP during the reporting period, but that there continues to be some new cases of UNMEE peacekeepers and civilian staff who are pressured to provide financial support to children they have fathered while in the country.

¶3. (U) UNMEE continues to require that all military personnel participate in quarterly awareness and prevention programs, which includes HIV/AIDS, SEA and TIP. Civilian employees receive similar training upon arrival at the mission. Mr. Mamadi said that the zero tolerance policy is heavily stressed during training.

¶4. (U) There have been no formal changes in the panel investigation system (see reftel B, para 4). The Office of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has recently added a Conduct and Disciplinary Unit (CDU) in Asmara that will check into new cases of abuse. The department has only been in place for two weeks and has a staff of two. Mr. Mamadi was not certain of the role the CDU will play, other than it is supposed to streamline the investigation of internal claims of SEA and TIP and that it reports directly to DPKO and not to his office. At this time it is unclear whether the CDU or the HRO will play the role on any investigative panels.

¶5. (U) UNMEE's outreach efforts to the local population continue to be extremely difficult (reftel B, para 5). The local media is completely controlled by the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE), leaving UNMEE with little capability of making direct contact with the population. The Eritrean population's perception of UNMEE remains unchanged (reftel B, para 6), although many people worry about what will happen if it loses its mandate.

¶6. (C) Comment: Mr. Mamadi (protect) painted a bleak

picture of how SEA and TIP cases are handled. He said he has been a member of eight previous peacekeeping forces, and has found the working conditions in Eritrea to be the worst of his career. He claimed that the HRO has been blocked out of most local investigations, which are almost always handled at the sector level by the local commander or within the force structure (up to and including the force commander). The HRO is only called upon if it has a needed area of expertise. Although the zero tolerance policy is well accepted at mission headquarters, it does not seem to filter down to remote areas. The force commanders often reassign personnel accused of SEA to other commands within the mission. In other cases, local deals are struck. In neither instance is a case file kept. In the majority of cases, HRO is not informed of the facts, conclusions, recommendations, or dispensations of the boards of inquiry. HRO generally becomes aware of cases through the complainant or a local Eritrean official, after the fact and based on hearsay, making it difficult to collect statistical data. These cases almost always concern the aftermath of a private settlement (usually paternity) brokered by a local Eritrean official and the sector commander, resulting from a consensual sexual relationship. The UNMEE soldier is often repatriated to his country of origin, or rotated within the mission, leaving the Eritrean mother with little or no recourse for enforcing the settlement. Mr. Mamadi added that many of the incoming soldiers do not speak English which is another area of concern, as the HRO staff is limited in its ability to communicate with the soldiers and provide necessary training.

17. (C) Comment con,t: Mr. Mamadi (protect) also expressed concerns that UNMEE management was creating an environment in which HRO cannot effectively accomplish its mission. The HRO staff has been cut from 17 positions to a total of 10 for 2008 and the administrative staff has been reassigned, leaving the HRO officers with administrative duties that take away from their limited time in the field and prevent them from carrying out their mandate. Mr. Mamadi said that there is little or no synchronization between the missions on the Eritrean and Ethiopian sides of the border, and that this artificial division has a negative impact on his ability to investigate claims. He indicated that empire-building is rampant in the administration of the mission due to the lack of an SRSG, and he stressed several times his wish that the USG push for an appointment as a way to solve some of the mission,s problems, as well as address the deteriorating moral of the staff. End Comment.
MCINTYRE